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ABSTRACT

This brief discusses the outcomes of a study that examined the views of 32 secondary education teachers in four secondary schools on the inclusion of students with disabilities in their classrooms. Analyses of the interview data indicate that the general education teachers were committed to inclusion and that they did make instructional accommodations for students with disabilities. Many teachers, but not all, tried to maintain the curriculum and hold high expectations while providing these accommodations. Teachers at three of the schools emphasized teaching and learning of high intellectual quality and they believed this focus was appropriate for their students with disabilities. At two of these schools, classroom teachers felt they received important help from special education teachers and used students' Individualized Education Programs to guide instruction and assessment. Special education teachers were believed to be particularly helpful in team teaching situations within inclusive classrooms and in assisting with accommodations and modeling instructional strategies. At the fourth school, teachers had a favorable view of inclusion and found it helped their teaching in a general sense. Personalized Learning Plans helped teachers focus on relationships with students and their effective development; however, these teachers did not emphasize complex or intellectually demanding instruction. (Contains 16 references.) (CR)

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for Youth with Disabilities

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Brief

Classroom Teachers' Views on Inclusion

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There is an emerging consensus that special education is in need of major reform (e.g., Trent, Artiles, & Englert, 1998) and that school reform in general must address the diverse needs of students with disabilities (e.g., McDonnell, McLaughlin, & Morison, 1997). Many students with disabilities have inadequate and inappropriate school experiences and fail to acquire the knowledge and skills needed for successful experiences after school. Coupled with the overrepresentation of students of color—particularly Black Americans—in special education, learning outcomes for students with disabilities relate to issues of social justice and schools' role in reproducing social inequalities (Patton, 1998; Oswald, Coutinho, Best, & Singh, 1999; Rizvi & Lingard, 1996). Separate and exclusionary practices that have been common in special education seem to be at odds with the democratic mission of public schooling.

Special education reforms focus largely on the inclusion of students with disabilities in general education classes, and current federal legislation (i.e., the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act of 1997, or IDEA '97) requires students with disabilities to be educated in the least restrictive environment. But including

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INSTITUTE MISSION

The mission of the institute is to expand the current knowledge base related to practices and policies in secondary schools that enhance learning, achievement, and postschool outcomes for students with disabilities.

CORE RESEARCH QUESTIONS

1. What are critical features of instruction, assessment, and support strategies that promote authentic understanding, and achievement (and performance) for all students?

2. How have changes in authentic inclusive learning and schooling practices affected the school and postschool outcomes (and their interaction) for students with disabilities (collectively and disaggregated) using frames of reference focused on equity, value added, and accountability?

3. How do schools accommodate district and state outcome assessments, and how do such accommodations affect the participation in, reporting of, and validity of assessment?

4. In schools evolving toward authentic and inclusive instruction, what are the roles and expectations of stakeholders as they engage in planning for secondary and postsecondary experiences?

5. What contextual factors are required to support and sustain the development of secondary-level learning environments that promote authentic understanding, achievement, and performances for all students?

6. What strategies are effective in providing both information and support to policymakers, school administrators, teachers, human service personnel, and the community so they utilize the findings to create and support learning environments that promote authentic understanding, achievement, and performance for all students?

students with disabilities in general education is not simply a matter of class assignment and schedule changes. Inclusion must also entail fundamental transformations in teaching (see, e.g., Gerber, 1996). As Slee (1996) has put it, inclusion "demands the interrogation of the conditions that serve to construct hierarchies of identity [e.g., disability]. . . . Retheorizing the form and practice of regular education is central to this project" (p. 113). Without these instructional changes, students with disabilities may be enrolled more regularly, and for more time, in general education classes, while little else about their school experience is altered.

Since the fall of 1999, the Research Institute on Secondary Education Reform for Youth with Disabilities (RISER) has studied inclusion and instructional reform in four secondary schools across the United States. As a part of this research, we observed and interviewed general education teachers who had students with disabilities in their classes. In future analyses, we will examine the extent of authentic instruction and assessment[1] in inclusive high schools and its relationship to the performance of students with and without disabilities. In this brief, we summarize participating teachers' views on (a) inclusion and its impact on their teaching and their students and (b) the extent to which special education teachers and Individualized Education Programs (IEPs) have supported inclusion efforts. Before we examine these teachers' views, however, we take a brief look at the schools in the study.

[1] Authentic instruction and assessment meets three main criteria—construction of knowledge, disciplined inquiry, and value beyond school. King, Schroeder, and Chawszczewski (2001) discuss these criteria and present a preliminary analysis of assessment tasks and student work data from RISER schools. For further elaboration of the framework of authentic intellectual work and related research, see Avery (1999); Hanley-Maxwell et al. (1999); Lee (2001); Lee, Smith, and Croninger (1997); Newmann and Associates (1996); Newmann, Marks, and Gamoran (1996); and Smith, Lee, and Newmann (2001).

Four Schools

RISER aims to expand the current knowledge base related to practice and policies in secondary schools that enhance learning, achievement, and postschool outcomes for students with disabilities. Central to this project is the SAIL model—Schools of Authentic and Inclusive Learning (Hanley-Maxwell, Phelps, Braden, & Warren, 1999)—and one of its main research questions addresses the intersection of inclusion and instructional practices by asking: What are critical features of instruction, assessment, and support strategies that promote authentic understanding, achievement, and performance for all students?

To select the schools for our study, we conducted a nationwide search for secondary schools with instructional reform efforts that included students with disabilities in general education classes. We received 30 nominations. After follow-up phone interviews, we visited 10 of the schools and selected 4 because they demonstrated a high degree of inclusive practices *and* some degree of authentic instructional and assessment practices.[2] The vast majority of special education students at these schools had mild to moderate disabilities. Figure 1 summarizes key characteristics of the four schools.

[2] RISER sought schools that demonstrated a high degree of inclusive practices in two ways: (a) including their students with disabilities in general education classes and (b) including in the overall school population students with a range of disabilities, from mild to severe. Our search did not reveal any schools that did both. In our sample of four schools, Mount Adam and Seven Hills (see Figure 1) had a few students with severe disabilities, and these students participated minimally or not at all in general education classes. At Seven Hills, for example, there was a program for students with multiple and severe disabilities (seven in 2000–2001) who participated in a few mainstream classes and activities but received assistance and tutoring from general education students. School names are pseudonyms.

Figure 1*

Clarendon Secondary School

- Urban school of choice for approximately 520 students in Grades 7–12
- 52% Latino/a, 45% African American, 2% White, 1% Asian; 37% free/reduced-price lunch
- 22% of students in special education, mostly with mild to moderate learning disabilities
- Three divisions, interdisciplinary curriculum, service learning
- Graduation by course completion, portfolio, and exhibition
- Member of a national secondary school reform organization

Mount Adam High School

- Rural school of approximately 480 students in Grades 9–12
- 99+% White; 17% free/reduced-price lunch
- 16% of students in special education, mostly with mild to moderate learning disabilities
- Personalized Learning Plans for all students, options for community-based learning
- Professional Development School

Rothbury High School

- Suburban/rural school of approximately 880 students in Grades 9–12
- 98% White, 1% Asian, 1% Latino/a; 2% free/reduced-price lunch
- 17% of students in special education, mostly with mild to moderate learning disabilities
- New school in 1992, with inclusion a key component
- Two divisions, limited interdisciplinary curriculum, service learning
- Graduation by course completion, portfolio, and exhibition
- Member of a national secondary school reform organization

Seven Hills High School

- Small city school of approximately 1,000 students in Grades 9–12
- 70% White, 15% Native American, 8% Hispanic, 6% African American, 1% Asian; 17% free/reduced-price lunch
- 11% of students in special education, mostly with mild to moderate learning disabilities
- New school in 1989, with inclusion a key component
- Special education support in general education classes or in learning center
- Team-teaching with general and special education teachers, study skills class required for students with disabilities

* Demographic data provided by the school for the first year of data collection, 1999–2000

Clarendon Secondary School

Clarendon Secondary School is an urban school of about 520 students in Grades 7–12. Fifty-two percent of the students are Latino/a, 45% African American, 2% White, and 1% Asian. Thirty-seven percent receive free or reduced-price lunch, although school personnel estimated that about 85% are eligible. The school is divided into three divisions for Grades 7/8, 9/10, and 11/12. Classes in the main subject areas emphasize an interdisciplinary curriculum, and students participate in service learning. Graduation is conferred upon the fulfillment of course requirements and the successful completion of portfolios and exhibitions. Clarendon is a member of a national school reform organization. Of the total student population, 22% are students with disabilities, most of them with a mild to moderate learning disability. All of the students with disabilities are fully included in general education classes; additional help from special education teachers is provided as needed in a resource room and occasionally in their general classes.

Mount Adam High School

Mount Adam High School is a rural school of approximately 480 students in Grades 9–12. Almost all of the students are White, with 17% receiving free or reduced-price lunch. Students, their parents, and teachers create individual Personalized Learning Plans (PLPs). PLPs are designed to encourage strong adult-student relationships and to help structure students' school experiences. The school also offers options for community-based learning. As a Professional Development School, Mount Adam works in conjunction with the nearby state university. Of the total student population, 16% are special education students, most with a mild to moderate learning disability. All of the students with disabilities take general education classes with support from paraprofessionals in classes and from special educators in a resource room. However, in some classes, special education students predominate, and almost all special education students are in the general track rather than college-bound curriculum.

Rothbury High School

Rothbury High School is a growing suburban-rural school, with 880 students in Grades 9–12 in 1999-2000 and about 980 in 2000-2001. Of its students, 98% are White, 1% Asian, and 1% Latino/a; only 2% receive free or reduced-price lunch. The school opened in 1992 with a clear mission of inclusion. The school is divided into two divisions, one for Grades 9–10 and the other for Grades 11–12. All students participate in service learning, and graduation is conferred upon the fulfillment of course requirements and the successful completion of portfolios and exhibitions. Rothbury is also a member of a national school reform organization. Of the total student population, 17% are students with disabilities, most of them with a mild to moderate learning disability. Almost all of the students with disabilities are fully included in general education classes with support from special education teachers within the classes.

Seven Hills High School

Seven Hills High School is a small city school of approximately 1,000 students in Grades 9–12. Students are 70% White, 15% Native American, 8% Hispanic, 6% African American, and 1% Asian, with 17% receiving free or reduced-price lunch. The school opened as a new district high school in 1989 with inclusion a key component. Three to four courses per year in science, math, and history are team-taught by general and special education teachers. Eleven percent of the total student population are special education students, most with a mild to moderate learning disability. Of these, about 28% are fully included, and about 50% spend

more than three quarters of their class time in general education classes. Among the latter group, for example, ninth-grade students with disabilities take a separate study skills class that largely focuses on developing self-determination skills. Special education teachers provide support in general education classes, in separate classes for students with disabilities, and in a learning center that is open to all students.

This brief presents findings from data collected at the four schools in our study from fall 1999 through fall 2001. We asked each school to identify eight general education teachers who had students with disabilities in their classes and who emphasized intellectual quality in their teaching. The teachers represented the academic subject areas of language arts, science, mathematics, and social studies—one teacher in each area from Grades 9 and 10 and one in each area from Grades 11 and 12 at each school. Each semester, RISER researchers in teams of two or three visited the schools for 2 to 3 days. Each of the eight teachers participated in a structured interview lasting about an hour, and one of each teacher's classes was observed three times. Each semester, these teachers also submitted what they considered to be an important assessment task used in the observed class, along with the student work completed for the task.[3]

In the next sections, we report classroom teachers' perspectives on (a) the ways in which inclusion affected their teaching and their students; (b) the extent to which they collaborated with, and received support from special education teachers; and (c) the usefulness of IEPs. We conclude by drawing some implications from these findings.

Findings

Inclusion and Teaching

With only a few exceptions, teachers across all four schools were firmly committed to inclusion. They saw inclusion as a benefit not only for students with disabilities, but for all students and for their own teaching as well. At all schools, teachers modified their instruction for students with disabilities in

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[3] In interviews, we asked classroom teachers to discuss the lessons we had observed and explain the ways in which the lessons were and were not typical. We also asked the teachers to clarify their major objectives for the class and the ways in which these objectives related to their students with disabilities. Finally, the teachers were asked to describe their school's approach to inclusion, the ways in which inclusion influenced their teaching, and the support (or lack of support) they received for teaching in a school with inclusion (e.g., from special education staff and students' IEPs). Due to changes in teaching staff, the number of regular education teachers interviewed at each school varied from 8 to 11. Due to time constraints, not all teachers were asked all interview questions.

Interviewers reviewed and corrected the interview transcriptions. Two research staff members were then assigned one school apiece, and a third was assigned the remaining two schools. For each school, research staff coded the interviews and wrote a school report that addressed the following questions:

- What are teachers' conceptions of curriculum and instruction? How do teachers characterize their assessment practices? How do teachers' views relate to the three general criteria of authentic pedagogy (construction of knowledge, disciplined inquiry, and value beyond school)?
- How does inclusion influence teaching? What are teachers' approaches (e.g., accommodations) to their students with disabilities?
- What kinds of structural, programmatic, and cultural supports do teachers cite for authentic and inclusive practices?

Three other researchers then reviewed each report. Among the three, one had made research visits to the school in question, and at least one other had not visited the school or written any of the individual school reports. Finally, a fourth researcher coded all teacher interviews from the four schools and, based on this coding and the four individual school reports, wrote a cross-case analysis focused on the above questions. This process of qualitative analysis helped ensure that descriptions and interpretations relevant to the above questions, as well as supporting evidence for them, were examined for consistency and validity, both for individual schools and across all four schools.

their classes, but only at three schools were teachers committed to practices consistent with authentic intellectual work.

Inclusion and students. According to some of the teachers at each school, inclusion benefited all students. Teachers felt that it provided learning opportunities to students with disabilities that they otherwise would not receive. A Rothbury teacher's comments were illustrative:

> What would negatively affect my teaching is a change to a tracked system where all kids are no longer offered the same curriculum. . . . Doors would be shut on them. Heterogeneity has enabled me to give students with weaker math skills a difficult math project.

Similarly, teachers believed that expectations for students with disabilities were higher in inclusive classrooms than in segregated programs. Teachers thought that these students benefited not only from expanded learning opportunities but also from their interactions with general education students, who were seen as positive role models.

The benefits to students with and without disabilities were reciprocal, according to some of the teachers. A teacher at Mount Adam explained that inclusion is positive because other students see "special education students interact in class and answer questions. It's a real positive acceptance on their part, just being able to recognize the talents of other students that they normally wouldn't think of being talented at all." But there were also important dissenting viewpoints at this school. Another teacher felt that any benefits from inclusion were nullified by the fact that classes were heavily tracked and almost all special education students were placed in general rather than college-bound classes. In her words:

> Even though we say it's inclusion, we definitely track here—there's college prep and there's not. The kids all know who they are, they literally even say it to you, "Oh, I'm in the dummy class." That kills me; I hate that. So perhaps the negative effect would be the tracking because the students know it and there are no positive role models for them.

Inclusion and instruction. Almost all of the teachers we interviewed were asked directly about the ways in which inclusion influenced their teaching, and they unanimously agreed that it had positive effects. Many acknowledged the challenges of teaching in inclusive classes, but generally they felt it enhanced their overall approach. A Seven Hills teacher said inclusion has made his teaching "a little more difficult because bringing these kids in and modifying tests and activities—it's a little bit more difficult, but it makes it a little more challenging, too, and encourages teachers to stretch and adapt and that's good." As a Clarendon teacher put it:

> The positive effect [inclusion] has had on my teaching is that many times what is helpful for special ed kids is helpful for regular ed kids and also helpful for me. The clearer I can be, and the more I can bring the ideas into the realm of the concrete, the better.

Teachers disclosed that inclusion pushed them to focus on students and to individualize their instruction as much as possible. A Rothbury teacher described the positive effect of inclusion as follows:

> I'm always on my toes. I'm always thinking about every student in my classroom as opposed to the subject, so I don't go into my calculus class and say, "OK, what calculus lesson am I going to teach them today?" or "What integrated math 3 am I going to teach them?" But instead, "Who are the kids in my class and what do they need?" So that's positive.

Even a Mount Adam teacher who felt that inclusion had an overall negative impact on the school believed that it had pushed him to use interactive approaches with students:

> The kids do benefit by having lots of different learners in a room. And I have to stretch as a teacher because of it, too, because I know that I can't just

> stand up there and lecture. I have to be more mindful of the people who don't process that way. So I'm constantly trying to tap into different learning intelligences and styles and modes and all that stuff. So I think it's good for me, it keeps me fresh.

Although support for inclusion was generally strong, many teachers noted that there was a downside. The negatives included the extra time required for lesson or assignment preparation and for participation in meetings for students with disabilities (e.g., IEPs), the occasional practice of placing too many students with disabilities in a single class, and the experience of confronting their own lack of skill in accommodating these students. On the last point, a Clarendon teacher's comments were particularly poignant. She stated:

> There are times when I feel like as a teacher this is not feasible and I'm being asked to do something that most people would find impossible and that the people who set up this inclusion model are not people who will be in the classroom or haven't been there in a long time. . . . I think I get frustrated, I think a lot of teachers get frustrated. It's not that we want to reject students, it's that we want to be able to adequately meet their needs and the biggest reason teachers burn out is that we feel ineffective.

Inclusion and authentic pedagogy. Virtually all teachers across the four schools indicated that they modified their instructional practices to accommodate the needs of special education students. There was, however, considerable variation in the extent to which teachers espoused authentic instructional practices and held challenging expectations for both students with and students without disabilities. Teachers at individual schools were fairly consistent on these issues, however.

At Clarendon, all teachers we interviewed emphasized standards of "habits of mind" as key to their teaching. These standards correspond closely to the three general characteristics of authentic intellectual work (construction of knowledge, disciplined inquiry, and value beyond school). In lessons, exhibitions, and portfolios, teachers expected students to show competence in these five habits of mind: making connections, taking different perspectives, using evidence to support an argument, speculating on what might happen differently, and explaining why it matters. One of the teachers summarized well the school's instructional focus. He said he wanted students to

> understand what the question [under study] is and be capable of thinking about it critically from their own point of view and multiple points of view. And [they] will be able to apply knowledge that they have gained from the work to that question and that question would be something that is going to be useful to them in their life. . . .We're studying a unit on how the U.S. became a dominant world power and I think if they have a good sense of what the U.S. is in relation to other countries of the world, I consider that useful.

This teacher added that he expected students to express their ideas and support them coherently in writing.

Despite Clarendon's clear instructional focus and inclusive classrooms, persisting dilemmas of teaching remained. For example, one teacher struggled with the inherent tension over broad content coverage and depth of learning. He confessed he was not happy with his recent decision to drop a creative simulation role-playing exercise[4] in order to cover more content. Some teachers thought inclusion weakened the curriculum and described adapting instruction in ways that lowered expectations for students with disabilities. One put it bluntly: "In general, I have less expectations for students with disabilities."

[4] The abandoned exercise was a simulation in which students would be asked to play diplomats from different countries and negotiate with each other on the events leading to World War I.

One Clarendon teacher also noted that the school had had a much higher percentage of special needs students, including students with disabilities, in the last 4 years. As a result, the school was struggling with their inclusion model even though they were committed to it philosophically. He asserted that these difficulties were having a negative impact on teaching and learning, and his comments suggest the need to improve the knowledge and skills of teachers to better educate students with disabilities. He stated:

> It's made things so much more difficult, it really has made teaching much more frustrating, more challenging. . . . It's made talking about curriculum a lot more difficult because we talk about things and we know that we don't have the perfect inclusion model. So therefore, basically what's going to happen is kids that are going to have difficulties are going to get left behind and kids that are able to soar are going to be held back. Until we get the perfect way to accommodate everybody, it's going to be frustrating.

At Seven Hills, most teachers emphasized higher order thinking skills and depth of knowledge rather than rote understanding of facts and ideas. Many elaborated on how they balanced lower and higher order tasks in their lessons and assessments for all students. As we will see later, the close working relationship between special and general education teachers seemed to support these approaches. A majority of the eight classroom teachers at Seven Hills said explicitly that the key to their teaching was having students construct their own knowledge and rely much less on the teacher. One teacher, for example, said she used to "spoon-feed" students information, but now she holds them accountable for their learning, using techniques such as role-play to demonstrate scientific understanding.

Rothbury teachers emphasized in-depth learning and solving real-world problems. Though traditional tests and quizzes had their place in these classrooms, exhibitions were the cornerstone of student assessment. Teachers argued that these exhibitions required students to show complex thinking and in-depth understanding of content. Students with disabilities received appropriate accommodations but were held to standards of performance similar to those expected from general education students.

One teacher compared her experiences at Rothbury to those at a previous school and explained how Rothbury's commitment to reform, including inclusion, supported high-quality teaching:

> The school's commitment to reform has been critical to both supporting my efforts to become an effective teacher and to keeping me focused on becoming a better teacher. Last year, at a more traditional school, when I tried to shift control of the classroom to the students, other teachers communicated through their reactions that they believed I was doomed to failure. This was difficult for me, particularly as a new teacher. I felt that reform was talked about, but there were no real earnest efforts to implement it, and I felt myself falling into more and more traditional teaching practices myself.

At Rothbury, she had experienced the following positive effects: (a) general support and encouragement from colleagues, (b) ideas from colleagues to support her daily efforts to implement authentic teaching practices, and (c) scheduled opportunities to reflect on teaching practices.

Teachers at Mount Adam, in contrast to those at the other three schools, tended to focus on the importance of the relationships between students and teachers, emphasizing students' affective traits over their academic or intellectual progress. One teacher summarized the situation with some frustration:

> Although I love teaching those kids . . . so little is focused on teaching here that I can't really say there is a positive effect [of inclusion] on my teaching. I mean, we focus on PLPs [Personalized Learning Plans] and relating to the kids, but we don't really

> focus on good teaching. I wish we did, I really wish we did and I don't know if I'm alone in saying this, but we spend so much time on other things.

Collaboration Between Special and General Education Teachers

General and special education teachers collaborated at all four schools, and special education staff assisted in or team-taught many classes. But across schools, classroom teachers varied significantly in how helpful they perceived special education teachers to be to their teaching.

Rothbury and Seven Hills teachers described the most positive working relationships with special education teachers. At both schools, special educators came into classes and taught along with classroom teachers, who unanimously saw the special educators as providing important teaching assistance. Classroom teachers emphasized that special educators provided them with critical information about students, helped them accommodate students' disabilities in lessons and assessments, and helped monitor students' progress. In addition, special education teachers sometimes modeled valuable instructional strategies. One of the Seven Hills teachers expressed this well. He said he

> received a lot of help from the [special education] program; you've got a good support network there and they have some good information. They have come in and team-taught classes with us, and brought their expertise on small group work and authentic assessment. . . . The [special education] program here does everything; they can let the teachers here know what the needs of the students are and how they can fit that into test taking—from the use of alternative assessments to tools that kids can use in taking tests.

At Seven Hills, a general education and a special education teacher team-taught three classes in 2000–2001—one in history, one in science, and one in math. In one of the school's exceptions to full inclusion, the team-taught science class was specifically for students with disabilities. According to the general science teacher, the special educator "really helps me because his background is in special ed and so the way he would interact with some kids that are challenging discipline-wise or behavior-wise, I've learned from him."

In contrast, classroom teachers at Clarendon and Mount Adam had mixed perceptions. Roughly half the teachers at each of these schools said they received important help from special education teachers. At Clarendon, four of the eight teachers saw special educators who came into their classrooms as supporting students, helping with the accommodation of students' disabilities, and suggesting instructional strategies. On the other hand, other Clarendon teachers believed that the special education staff did minimal work. In one case, a classroom teacher asked a special education teacher to modify a task, "but nothing transpired. . . . It's just absurd. The resource room teachers only want to take more time out of a teacher's day to meet with them to discuss children with disabilities, wondering how they're doing in the class." Other teachers mentioned that special education teachers were not particularly effective with students, due in part to insufficient understanding of the curriculum.

Classroom teachers at Mount Adam echoed these divergent views. One teacher said there was little collaboration because the teachers in the special education department "are just totally unprepared, unqualified to be in the room; they cause more problems than they're worth." Another teacher said she got terrific help, especially with accommodations on assignments and assessments for students with disabilities.

Use of IEPs

In inclusive schools attended by special education students with mild to moderate disabilities, how do classroom teachers use individualized education programs, and how helpful do they think they are? Teachers' responses to these questions showed the same breakdown by school as their responses to our question about collaboration between general and special education teachers. Almost all Rothbury and Seven Hills teachers found IEPs helpful in planning their instruction, particularly in making modifications for their students. In contrast, only half of the teachers interviewed at Mount Adam and less than half of those at Clarendon reported using IEPs at all

Seven of the eight teachers interviewed at Seven Hills indicated that they used IEPs to modify their instructional and assessment practices to accommodate the needs of special education students. They were clear that IEPs were rarely used to change *what* was taught (i.e., the nature of the curriculum); instead, they were employed to change *how* the curriculum was taught to special education students and how these students were assessed. Perhaps these results reflect in part the close and positive collaboration between special and general education teachers at this school. Surprisingly, the eighth teacher at Seven Hills seemed unfamiliar with his special education students' IEPs. In discussing his three students, he had a sense of the general area in which two had disabilities, but he was not aware of their specific disabilities.

At Rothbury, the use of IEPs was also widespread. All seven of the classroom teachers interviewed about IEPs reported that they used them to modify how the curriculum was taught (again, not what was taught) and how students were assessed. Two of the teachers noted, however, that they occasionally used IEPs as resources in planning instruction, but only for students with poor performance. In one teacher's words:

> When I get my list of kids that I know are having IEPs, I just look at the list and I don't look at what the IEP says and I let that go awhile into the year before I take a look at it because I want to see what they do cold. . . . If I have a kid in my class early on in the year who is really, really struggling then I will go back and take a look at what the IEP says.

At Mount Adam, just half the teachers interviewed used IEPs and reported making accommodations for special education students based on their IEPs. As one teacher put it:

> All students are required to produce, I have pretty high standards for the products. However, if a student has a documented disability in which they can't for whatever reason—let's say they have a language disability and they can't write—I would probably break down the process where they gave me two rough drafts before they finally got to the final product. So I pretty much hold them to high standards, but I make accommodations if they need them.

Those teachers at Mount Adam who did not use IEPs expressed the conviction that they would do what was in the IEPs anyway or that the IEPs really would not require them to make any modifications to curriculum or instruction.

At Clarendon, only two of the eight classroom teachers who were asked about IEPs indicated that they influenced their practices. These teachers reported that IEPs helped give them insight into a student's disability and helped them to modify their instruction. In looking to explain the low proportion of Clarendon teachers who made use of IEPs, it is important to note again that the school had only recently begun serving more students with special needs. Thus, preparing constructive IEPs and using them may not have been part of the school's regular practice. However, our interviews gave us reason

to believe that there was more to the story. One teacher reported that she had not been able to see her students' IEPs, suggesting that the plans had not been prepared or were not up-to-date. Another teacher said he had not seen an IEP that required him to make any adaptations in the classroom. Three other teachers stated that IEPs had little impact on their instructional practices; one of this group saw IEPs as serving no function except fulfilling a bureaucratic requirement. He said: "They're a legal requirement which has no relationship to the vital nature of the school curriculum. In fact, what they do is siphon people away from kids' learning so that the legal requirements can be fulfilled."

Conclusions

This analysis of interview data from our study of inclusion and reform in four secondary schools indicates that the general education teachers in these schools were committed to inclusion and that they did make instructional accommodations for students with disabilities. Many teachers, but not all, tried to maintain the curriculum and hold high expectations while providing these accommodations. Teachers at three of the schools—Clarendon, Rothbury, and Seven Hills—emphasized teaching and learning of high intellectual quality, and they believed this focus was appropriate for their students with disabilities. At two of these schools, Rothbury and Seven Hills, classroom teachers felt they received important help from special education teachers and used students' IEPs to guide instruction and assessment. Special education teachers were believed to be particularly helpful in team-teaching situations within inclusive classes, assisting with accommodations and modeling instructional strategies.

At the fourth schools, Mount Adam, teachers had a favorable view of inclusion and found it helped their teaching in a general sense. The Personalized Learning Plans helped the teachers focus on relationships with students and their affective development. Though this approach could in theory enhance authentic work by more closely tying the curriculum to students' personal lives and experiences, the Mount Adam teachers did not emphasize complex or intellectually demanding instruction. At Mount Adam, with its system of tracking and placement of students with disabilities largely in general rather than college-bound classes, it was apparent that inclusion was not coupled with any other major changes that influenced the quality of instruction.

The major implication of this qualitative study seems to be that the inclusion of students with disabilities in general education classes and teaching of high intellectual quality can be integrated. Although the instructional and assessment practices of the teachers we interviewed remain to be verified, the teachers believed that with appropriate accommodations, their students with disabilities could be intellectually challenged and held to high expectations. There is clearly not a necessary connection between inclusion and practice, as Mount Adam exemplified. But at the very least, from teachers' points of view, fundamental shifts in pedagogic practice for general education can sustain inclusion efforts.

We draw an additional implication from what we have learned from teachers at Rothbury and Seven Hills. These two schools differed somewhat in their structuring of inclusion. Rothbury fully included almost all students with disabilities in general education classes, whereas Seven Hills retained some separate classes for many students with disabilities. These schools' successes with reform and inclusion, notwithstanding their different approaches, suggest that secondary-level inclusion need not be restricted to a single model. Inclusive practices are advocated, and rightly so, in

opposition to the historical pattern of excluding students with disabilities from general education. Exclusion has not only limited the access of students with disabilities to the general curriculum, but also their opportunity to achieve. But in response to the failed practices of exclusion, some advocates for students with disabilities often insist upon *full* inclusion, deeming any exclusion unproductive or worse (see, e.g., Lipsky & Gartner, 1996). This study leads us to conclude that a more flexible approach to reform may be warranted, one that acknowledges that appropriate differentiation of instruction and accommodations for students with disabilities may take place in separate settings.

It has been argued that inclusion is not really viable, especially at the secondary level, because of (a) general education teachers' limited knowledge and skill related to instruction of students with disabilities, (b) the negative attitudes some general education teachers have toward students with disabilities, and (c) general education teachers' need for ongoing support (for a summary, see Hanley-Maxwell et al., 1999). Data from the schools in this study suggest that, although these problems persist, they need not inhibit inclusion efforts. The classroom teachers in our study welcomed students with disabilities and embraced inclusion, and in at least two of the four schools, they received important support from special educators and guidance from students' IEPs. For the most part, teachers felt relatively successful with their instructional approaches and adaptations for their students.

Final data collection for the project was completed in fall 2001. In future reports, we will examine the extent of authentic pedgogy in the eight classes at each school—as reflected in observed lessons and teachers' assessment tasks— and its relationship to student performance. We will compare students with and without disabilities on (a) their degree of opportunity for authentic learning in these inclusive classes and (b) their level of performance as indicated by their work on assessment tasks. Preliminary analysis of 16 tasks and the student work on these tasks from two of the schools indicated that students with mild to moderate learning disabilities who were assigned tasks demanding higher levels of authentic intellectual work performed better— not only in relation to other students with disabilities, but also in relation to nondisabled students who were assigned tasks demanding lower levels of authentic intellectual work (King et al., 2001). These results give reason for optimism about prospects for integrating inclusion and changes in teaching at the secondary level. We are hopeful that the full sample will bear out these early findings.

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